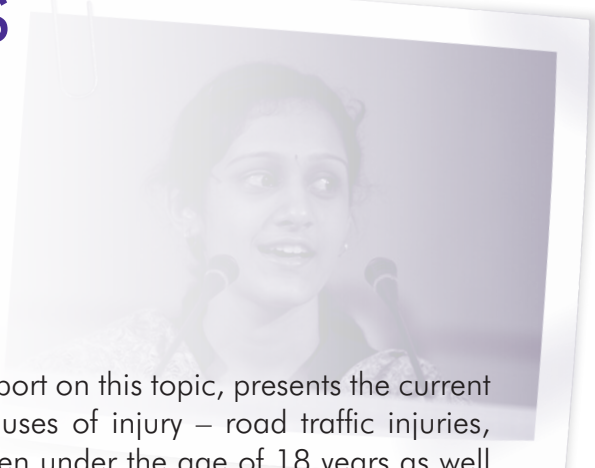




# Main messages from the World report

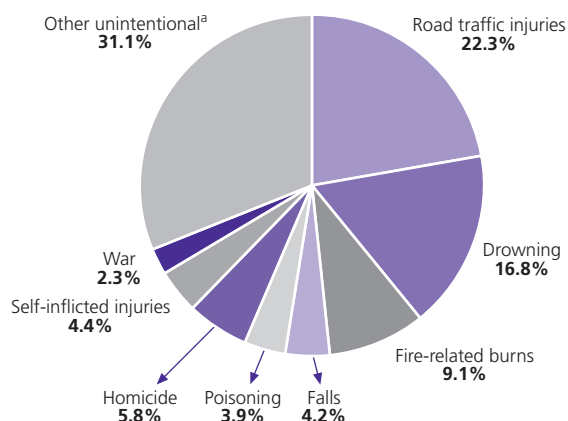


The *World report on child injury prevention*, the first world report on this topic, presents the current knowledge about the five most important unintentional causes of injury – road traffic injuries, drowning, fire-related burns, falls and poisoning – to children under the age of 18 years as well as some of the actions that need to be taken in order to tackle the problem. The following are the 11 main messages from the report.

## Child injuries are a major public health issue

Injury and violence is a major killer of children throughout the world, responsible for over 900 000 deaths in children and young people under the age of 18 years each year. Unintentional injuries account for almost 90% of these injuries and they are among the top three cause of death among children aged 5–19 years. In addition to the deaths, tens of millions of children require hospital care for non-fatal injuries every year – many are left with lifelong disabilities. Poor children in all countries are at increased risk of unintentional injuries.

Distribution of global child injury deaths by cause, 0–17 years, World, 2004



<sup>a</sup> 'Other unintentional' includes categories such as smothering, asphyxiation, choking, animal and venomous bites, hypothermia and hyperthermia as well as natural disasters.

Source: WHO (2008), Global Burden of Disease: 2004 update.

## Injuries directly affect child survival

As injuries are a leading cause of death and disability among children worldwide, to prevent these injuries is particularly important for the wider issue of child survival and the improvement of child health globally. Injury prevention programmes need to be integrated into other child health strategies, with ministries of health playing a pivotal role. In addition, injuries need to be included as one of the indicators in overall child survival programmes.

## Children are susceptible to injuries

There is a strong association between the age of a child, his or her development, how the child interacts with the world, the type of activities the child undertakes and the type of injury he or she sustains. In addition to these biological factors, there are other risk factors including poverty, the absence of protective factors, and the surrounding environment. The quality, availability and access to medical care is an important factor that can influence not only the likelihood of surviving an injury but also the long term consequences thereof.

## Child injuries can be prevented

Simply reproducing safe strategies that are relevant to adults will not protect children sufficiently. Prevention programmes that take into account the vulnerability of children and use a multidisciplinary approach have been shown to be the most effective for reducing child mortality as a result of injury. In countries where the greatest reductions have been recorded, a combination of these approaches has been employed.

## The cost of doing nothing is unacceptable

Losing a child unexpectedly has a huge impact on parents, siblings, families and communities. Additionally, child injuries place significant strain on overstretched health care systems. Injury prevention is a very cost-effective public health strategy – the costs of interventions are usually much lower than the cost of the consequences of injury. If effective interventions that have been proven to reduce child injuries in high-income countries were implemented around the world, more than 1000 children's lives could be saved every day.

## Few countries have good data on child injury

Data on injury and its determinants are essential for identifying priority issues and high-risk groups, and also for understanding the underlying causes of injury. Detailed analysis of sound data has undoubtedly been instrumental in achieving the high rates of success in child injury prevention in high-income countries. Few low-income and middle-income countries have robust information systems.

## Research on child injuries is too limited

Reductions in child injury mortality have been achieved in some countries as a result of the application of evidence-based programmes based on rigorous research and priority-setting. Research into the whole spectrum of child injuries – from primary prevention through to rehabilitation – needs much higher levels of funding. Such research will not only benefit developing countries enormously, but has the potential to uncover solutions not yet found in high-income countries.

## There are too few practitioners in child injury prevention

Most countries around the world have limited human resources to prevent the epidemic of child injuries and provide care and rehabilitation services for those injured. This problem is particularly acute in low-income countries where the burden of child injury is the greatest.

## Child injury prevention is the responsibility of many sectors

Child injury prevention should be a responsibility shared between multiple government departments, nongovernmental organizations, academic institutions, international agencies and the business sector. The health sector has a leading role to play, particularly with regard to collecting and analysing data; carrying out research on risk factors; implementing, monitoring and evaluating interventions; delivering appropriate primary, secondary and tertiary care; and campaigning for greater attention to the issue.

## Child injury prevention is under-funded

Well-targeted investment of financial resources is needed to tackle the problem of child injuries. Over the last decade, as countries have focused on the Millennium Development Goals, much funding has been provided to address infectious diseases – the major killer of children under five years of age. It would be a tragic mistake if this good investment were to be lost after children had survived their infancy, because injury prevention had earlier been ignored.

## Awareness needs to be created and maintained

The magnitude, risk factors and preventability of child injuries are not widely appreciated at all levels, from policy-makers and donors to the local community. This lack of understanding means that the resources required are not being allocated to prevention efforts and the political and organizational structures that are needed are not being put in place. Sustained campaigning is therefore required to raise awareness about the public health, social and economic impacts of child injuries, and how these injuries can be prevented.

**“Children all over the world are needlessly dying as a result of injuries for which there are known interventions.”**